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ABSTRACT

Two newsletters center on making the transition from school to work for students with disabilities. In the first newsletter, a personal reflection on transition by a man with cerebral palsy is followed by a review of services offered by colleges with support programs for learning disabled students. Guidelines are given to help parents prepare their handicapped child for employment, beginning with the elementary years and proceeding through high school. The final article of the first newsletter describes a workshop to help parents plan for their children's career education and employment opportunities. The second issue of the newsletter begins with a report on one community's approach to creating effective transition through a planning process that involved parents, school officials, government officials, adult service providers and local business leaders. The effort included a needs assessment, a survey of local employers, and a review of existing legislation and policies that affect transition to work for disabled persons. A summary of factors that influence successful collaboration is offered. (CL)

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TRANSITION SUMMARY

Information from the
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Handicapped Children and Youth

1985

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INTRODUCING
Transition Summary

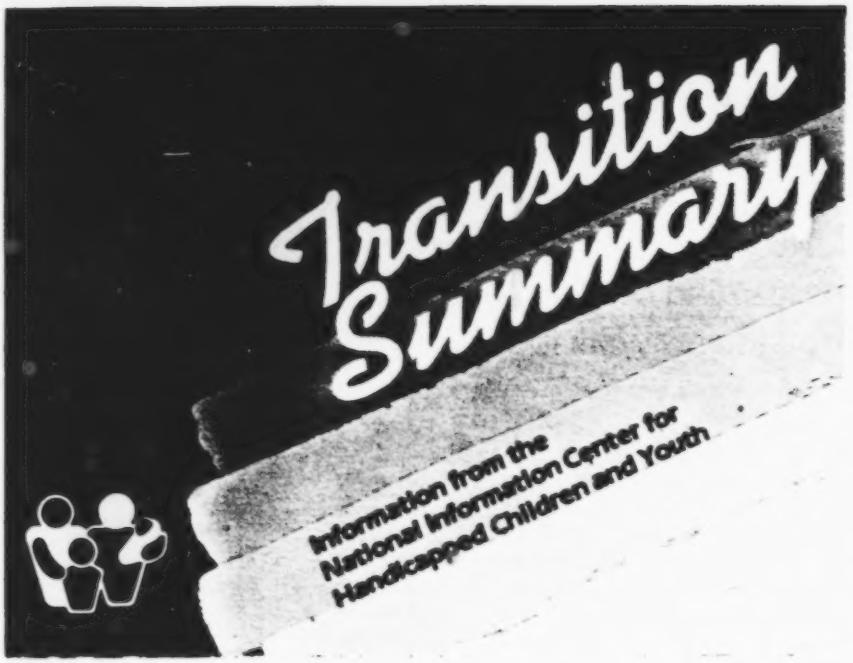
This is the first issue of *Transition Summary*. We are planning a total of six issues, two a year for three years. Each issue will include articles and letters from handicapped persons, their parents, professionals, and other concerned persons about how handicapped youth can best make the transition from the school environment to the adult world of independent living and work.

Handicapped youth often need help beyond that provided to non-handicapped youth in preparing for the future. This issue contains information about the types of additional help that can be provided. It begins with an article by James Murphy, the National Information Center's Information Resources Manager, describing his experience making the transition from school to work in the period before PL 94-142 and the current emphasis on transition services.

Next is an article by Charles T. Mangrum II of the University of Miami and Stephen S. Strichart of Florida International University. They summarize their research concerning services provided by colleges that offer support to learning disabled students. These services include diagnostic testing and prescriptive planning, program advisement, instructional assistance, instructional aids, and counseling. The information is based on research they conducted for two books they have recently written—one is entitled *College and the Learning Disabled Student* (Grune & Stratton, Orlando, Florida 32887-0018, $24.50); the other *Peterson's Guide to Colleges with Programs for Learning Disabled Students* (Peterson's Guides, P.O. Box 2123, Princeton, New Jersey 08540).

Third is an article that was first published in the December, 1984, issue of the *Exceptional Parent*, which they have kindly allowed us to reprint. The article, entitled "Vocational Training and Employment: Guidelines for Parents," was written by M. Sherril Moon and Andrew V. Beale, both of Virginia Commonwealth University. The article describes steps parents can take to prepare their handicapped child for gainful employment, beginning during the elementary school years and continuing through high school. The article makes suggestions about how to work with the child at home and how to coordinate with the schools and community agencies to ensure that appropriate vocational training and employment opportunities are available.

The final article, written by the staff of the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center of Alexandria, Virginia, describes a 15-hour workshop the center has developed to help parents plan effectively for their children's career education and employment opportunities. The workshop consists of five sessions in which topics such as the following are discussed: the parents' role in their child's career education development, legislation relevant to career development, obtaining vocational assessments, components of successful job placement and training programs, specific vocational education programs in local school systems, and promoting career education programs.



JULY 1985

Remembrances of Things Past: Transition Before PL 94-142

By Jim Murphy

In the ten years I have worked on disability issues no development has pleased me more than the current emphasis on services to young people who are making the transition from school to work. As a disabled person who came of age in the early 70's, I am acutely aware of what the lack of transition services can mean. In looking back, I feel that my transition was more difficult than it had to be. My purpose in writing this article is to provide a context in which parents and professionals can see their efforts and appreciate better the human dimension of the struggle to make the transition.

I was born in 1950 and was diagnosed as having cerebral palsy before I was three years old. My disability is relatively mild. The only difficulties I have are a slurring in my speech, awkwardness in my gait, and mild tremor in my hands which makes my handwriting slow and difficult to read. I was mainstreamed in the parochial schools in Brooklyn, New

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"Who has primary responsibility for academic advisement is not as important as ensuring that the learning disabilities program and academic departments work together in a facilitative manner."

York, beginning with kindergarten. My progress through school was normal. I was a better than average student and participated in extracurricular activities throughout grade school and high school.

It was only after I entered college that my disability began to affect my life. My parents were conscious of transition issues from the time that it was diagnosed. From a very early age my parents stressed that if I were going to support myself, I would have to make an effort to develop marketable skills. I think my parents were very farsighted in taking this approach. The article by M. Sherril Moon and Andrew V. Beale gives excellent advice to parents, suggesting they begin to work on transition issues at the time that their child is in primary school. While the article is written for parents of children with severe disabilities, the advice is of value to parents who have children with mild disabilities.

My experience also bears out the article's recommendations about early work experience. During high school and college I held several part-time jobs that were useful in teaching me about getting along as an employee. My very first job was as a delivery boy in a florist's shop. I had mentioned to my vocational rehabilitation counselor that I was interested in working part-time, he had a graduate student working as an intern whom he assigned to help me in finding my first job. I got my later jobs on my own or through a friend.

One of the most important things I learned on this job was that not everybody had the same attitudes and perspective as my parents and teachers. It also brought home to me the great variety of attitudes towards my disability that I would encounter. Some people were very accepting; others made up their mind about me the moment I opened my mouth. After working on the job for several months, it became clear that I didn't have the energy to keep up with my school work and get to the shop every day after school. My parents and I reluctantly decided that I should quit. Even though the job lasted a short time, it was a valuable experience. I knew more about myself and how I would fit in the working world after three months than I would have learned from reading about it or being told about it.

So far in this piece I have discussed some of the things that were helpful in making the transition, but I would be less than honest if I didn't say there were some real obstacles. One of the things that created obstacles was the lack of good quality counseling. The counselors I encountered in college and high school were not very sophisticated about employment issues. They either overemphasized the impact of my disability or seemed unaware of it. Their understanding of job search techniques also seemed naive. Counselors with the State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency frequently had a limited idea about the options people with disabilities have in employment. They tended to counsel people with certain disabilities to work in certain types of occupations and to avoid others, even when their disabilities presented no difficulties in pursuing other occupations.

For instance, at one point I was discouraged from applying to law school because I had a speech impediment. It was felt that a person with a speech problem could not successfully practice law. Since then I have met a number of lawyers who have cerebral palsy with speech problems similar to mine who are practicing law. I'm not trying to suggest that all counselors are uninformed and that their advice should be disregarded. I am urging young people with disabilities and their parents to do their own homework as well as depending on the advice of professionals.

One of the things I wished I had when I was making the transition from school to work was more contact with disabled adults who could serve as role models. There were times when I was going to school or after graduation while I was looking for a job when it would have been very helpful to talk over my experiences with someone who had been through the same things. I really wasn't sure what happened to people with cerebral palsy after they left school. I sure didn't encounter them in the usual positions of responsibility. If I took the initiative and went looking for such individuals, I probably would have had a hard time finding them. Today establishing contact would be much easier. Independent living centers and advocacy groups made up of adults with disabilities provide an easily accessible source for young people looking for role models. Parents concerned with transition should be making greater use of adults with disabilities as a resource.

Earlier in this article I referred to the "struggle of transition." Young people and their parents need to understand that even with the best support and planning successful transition from school to the world of work can often take longer than expected. We all occasionally encounter setbacks that are no fault of our own. Young people need to cultivate a resilience that will carry them through the times when even their best efforts don't seem to work. It is important above all that their frustration not diminish their capacity to believe in their own ability to make a contribution to their society.

Services Offered by College Support Programs for Learning Disabled Students

By Charles T. Mangrum II, University of Miami, and Stephen S. Strichart, Florida International University

"Young people need to cultivate a resilience that will carry them through the times when even their best efforts don't seem to work."

More and more learning disabled students are attending college. However, many of these students are not prepared for college studies. They have insufficient background in English, science, mathematics, and social studies as well as basic skill deficits. These limitations are further complicated by the students' lack of understanding of their learning disabilities. To help these students succeed, many colleges now offer support programs for learning disabled students.

We visited a number of college support programs for learning disabled students, spoke with the directors of many other programs, and reviewed the published literature related to learning disabled students attending college. The results of our research were published in our book, *College and The Learning Disabled Student*. Through this research we identified the key services provided by colleges with programs offering support to learning disabled students. In this article we describe these services.

Diagnostic Testing and Prescriptive Planning

In many learning disabilities college programs, students are diagnostically tested during their first semester on campus. The test results are used to plan basic skills remediation, course tutoring, and counseling.

Test batteries vary from program to program, however, certain areas of functioning are routinely examined. These include intelligence, academic skills, oral and written language, auditory and visual perceptual processes, study habits and skills, personality, and self-concept. Because of the lack of standardized tests normed on adult populations, tests typically used with younger learning disabled students are frequently used with learning-disabled college students. Program personnel also use informal tests and devices to gather data not provided by standardized tests.

The data from the diagnostic testing are used to formulate individual educational plans (IEPs) for students. The IEP identifies the goals and objectives for remediation in reading, spelling, writing, mathematics, and related language and perceptual skills. The IEP also includes tutoring strategies and suggestions for counseling.

Program Advisement

Learning disabled college students frequently enroll in courses that are too difficult for them. When they believe an instructor is understanding, they enroll in as many courses as possible with that instructor even when the courses are out of sequence or not part of their degree programs. For these reasons, learning disabled students need careful advising. Here are a set of guidelines for advising learning disabled college students:

1. *Consider strengths, weaknesses, and specific disabilities when planning students' programs.* Learning disabled students should be advised to avoid courses that require a higher-level of basic skills than they possess. Similarly, they should be advised to avoid courses where their learning disabilities would make it difficult for them to master the content and/or profit from the method of instruction. Before placing students in courses, the courses should be analyzed for difficulty level, prerequisite knowledge, and method of instruction.

2. *Advise students to take fewer than the usual number of credits per semester.* Learning disabled students should be advised to take reduced course loads so they have extra time to prepare for courses and to participate in tutoring, remediation, counseling, and other program services. New students should be told they will find it difficult to complete their degrees in a conventional four-years.

3. *Work out a balanced course load with respect to difficulty.* Reading, writing, and other course requirements should be examined to determine course difficulty. Once the difficulty of courses has been determined, advisors should plan students' programs taking the difficulty factor into account. For example, students could be advised to take one difficult course, two courses of moderate difficulty, and one course of minimal difficulty.

4. *Consider the frequency and length of class meetings.* Some students with long-term memory deficits do better in courses that meet several times a week. Length of class meeting is also important. Students with attention deficits will find it difficult to sustain attention in classes that exceed one hour. Such logistical factors should be considered when planning students' programs.

5. *Know who is teaching the course.* Not all faculty members have the desire and/or skills to meet the needs of learning disabled students. It is important to consider who is teaching a course before advising students to take the course.

6. *Arrange for cooperative academic advisement between the learning disabilities program and academic departments.* Who has primary responsibility for academic advisement is not as important as ensuring that the learning disabilities program and academic departments work together in a facilitative manner. The learning disabilities program staff knows a great deal about students, while the academic faculty knows a great deal about courses and programs of study. Both are critical for effective advisement of learning disabled college students.

"The goal of basic skills remediation is to assist students to meet the reading, mathematics, and written language requirements of courses they take as part of their degree programs."

Instructional Assistance. Most learning disabilities college programs provide basic skills remediation and course tutoring for program participants. In some cases the programs offer special courses designed to help students adjust to and succeed in college. When appropriate, program staff members confer with course instructors to advocate on behalf of the students.

Remediation. The focus of basic skills remediation is on reading, mathematics, and written language. Attention is also given to developing study skills and compensatory learning strategies. Sessions are often one-to-one and are usually conducted two to three times a week by trained learning disabilities specialists.

The goal of basic skills remediation is to assist students to meet the reading, mathematics, and written language requirements of courses they take as part of their degree programs. The focus is on improving basic skills and is not upon tutoring in course content. Intensive instruction is provided to fill gaps in the students' basic skills profiles and to raise their overall achievement levels.

Students are also helped to develop effective study skills and strategies they can apply in their courses. Because of their disabilities in cognitive, language, and perceptual-motor areas, learning disabled students are taught the use of compensatory or by-pass learning strategies. These strategies enable the students to use their learning strengths to meet the demands of their college courses.

Tutoring. The primary goal of tutoring is to help students pass their courses. Tutors help students understand and master the content of subject area courses. In most programs, the amount of tutoring learning disabled students receive varies with their ability to handle course content and requirements.

Tutors must know their content area and be aware of the learning styles of the persons they are tutoring. They must be accepting, supportive, and mature individuals who conduct themselves in a professional manner. Most programs use non-learning disabled students as peer tutors. Other programs prefer to use learning disabilities and/or subject-area teachers to tutor the students in subject-area courses. This provides for more program continuity and brings a higher level of training to bear upon the problems of the students.

Special Courses. Some learning disabilities college programs offer special courses. In some cases these courses are offered for credit. Some colleges average the grades for these courses into the student's Grade Point Average. Some examples of special courses are: Fundamentals of Communication, Personal Psychology, and Effective Study Skills. Some programs offer special sections of regular courses for learning disabled students. The special sections contain the standard course content, but the text and teaching style are modified. Often the special sections are team-taught by learning disabilities program staff and subject-area faculty.

Advocacy. Another service provided to learning disabled students is advocacy. Staff members from learning disabilities programs help college instructors understand the needs of learning disabled students who are in their courses. The staff members obtain lists of required texts for taping, obtain permission for learning disabled students to tape record lectures, and arrange opportunities for students to take tests in alternative ways. When students need more time to complete a course, staff members arrange for an incomplete grade. When extra time is not the answer, staff members help students withdraw from a course in time to avoid grade penalty.

In most programs, learning disabled students are encouraged to act as their own advocates. Staff members intervene only when students have unusual difficulties with their instructors. When the students do not want instructors to know of their learning disabilities, the advocacy function is suppressed. Typically students with mild learning disabilities prefer to remain anonymous, while those with more severe learning disabilities want instructors to be aware of their difficulties.

Instructional Aids. Their reading and written language deficits make it difficult for learning disabled college students to take lecture notes, read text materials, and take tests. Frequently, the students' potential for achievement in courses is inhibited by these difficulties. Learning disabilities programs respond by providing tape recorders, notetakers, taped texts, and alternative testing procedures.

Tape recorders. Learning disabled students who have difficulty taking written notes from lectures are encouraged to use tape recorders. Before using a tape recorder in classes, the students are advised to obtain permission from their instructors. Few instructors object to having their lectures taped. When instructors do object, students are encouraged to sign a form indicating that the taped lectures are only for their own use.

The use of tape recorders allows students to participate normally in classes and have a second chance to listen to the lectures. Use of this technique provides students with opportunities for unhurried listening, integration, organization, and writing coherent notes.

Notetakers. Many programs provide notetakers for learning disabled students. Most notetakers are non-learning disabled students taking the same classes as the learning disabled students. Occasionally, individuals are hired to sit in classes and take notes for the learning disabled students. It is a good idea to have learning disabled students rewrite the furnished notes in their own words to ensure that they understand the content.

Taped textbooks. To facilitate textbook reading, many learning disabled students are provided with taped textbooks. Learning disabilities programs have textbooks taped by Recordings for the Blind, Inc., 215 E. 58th Street, New York, NY 10002. Because the taping process takes several months, programs obtain textbooks to be taped far in advance of the beginning of the semester. Some programs establish taped textbook libraries from which students can check out materials.

Not all learning disabled students use taped textbooks. Some students do not need them and others do not like to use them. Some students find taped textbooks difficult to use because of the requirements made on their auditory memory and listening comprehension skills. For these students, it is helpful to have a program staff member summarize on tape the important information from textbooks.

Alternative Test Procedures. When necessary, learning disabilities college programs make arrangements for their students to take tests in alternative ways. Alternative test arrangements include: untimed tests, oral tests, take-home tests, objective tests instead of essays or vice versa, and special projects. Students may be allowed to type or tape their answers to test questions. Proctors sometimes read tests to the students, clarify or rephrase questions, define words, and/or write the student's dictated responses. Typically, instructors send their tests to the learning disabilities program and the tests are administered there under supervision of the program staff.

Counseling. Learning disabilities programs provide a variety of counseling services. The most common are individual counseling, group counseling, and informal rap sessions. The major counseling goal is to reduce students' anxiety associated with the demands of college life. Other counseling goals are building self-confidence, promoting socialization, and teaching life skills such as goal-setting and time and stress-management. Students are also helped to become assertive, to clarify their values and attitudes, and to develop trust in others.

"Learning disabilities programs provide a variety of counseling services. The most common are individual counseling, group counseling, and informal rap sessions."

Counseling sessions are usually held once a week. This allows program personnel to assess students' needs on an ongoing basis and use the counseling sessions to provide timely corrective actions. Group sessions are particularly effective because of the mutual support they foster. Group counseling encourages students to share successful adaptive techniques. Rap sessions are often the first opportunity for learning disabled students to talk to other learning disabled individuals about their problems and feelings. Students talk about problems they have in common such as dealing with the effects of medication and the pressure of having no free time. These sessions help students better understand their owr problems.

Conclusion

Learning disabled college students require a wide range of program services to succeed in college. The services begin with careful diagnostic testing and prescriptive planning. Based on IEP's, learning disabled college students are given program advisement, instructional assistance, and counseling. They are also taught how to use a variety of instructional aids. These services represent the core of learning disabilities college programs. It is essential that these program services be provided by dedicated and competent personnel who implement the strategies and techniques found to be successful with learning disabled college students.

Vocational Training and Employment Guidelines for Parents

By M Sherril Moon and Andrew V. Beale
Virginia Commonwealth University

Reprinted with permission of *The Exceptional Parent* magazine, Copyright © 1984 Psy-Ed Corporation. This article appeared in the December 1984 issue of *The Exceptional Parent* magazine. *The Exceptional Parent*, published eight times a year, provides practical information for parents and professionals concerned with the care and education of children and adults with disabilities. For subscription information, write *The Exceptional Parent*, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215.

As the first generation of students with handicaps served by Public Law 94-142 leave school, these citizens, as well as their families and the professionals who have worked with them,

"In the late 1970's and 1980's a number of model vocational training and job placement and training programs demonstrated the ability of the adolescent and adult with severe handicaps to work in nonsheltered jobs."

are increasingly dismayed with the lack of opportunities and appropriate vocational services (Bruder et al, 1984). Families who have grown accustomed to services under a legally mandated and federally coordinated service system learn that adult services such as vocational rehabilitation do not operate under entitlement (Elder, 1984). This is particularly true in terms of the provision of remunerative work, the expected outcome of school preparation. Parents, teachers, and school officials are often shocked to find that students with adequate job skills and appropriate social skills graduate and then sit at home for years (Hasazi et al, 1982; Wehman & Kregel, 1984). On the other hand, rehabilitation service agencies may not know the vocational potential of certain graduates when formal transition planning has not been initiated by the school system. The bottom line is that 50% to 75% of all persons with disabilities are unemployed (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1983), and the more severe the handicap, the less the likelihood that the person affected will ever be employed.

In fact, students who are severely developmentally disabled or those who may have been labeled as moderately, severely, or profoundly retarded, autistic, multiply handicapped, or severely physically handicapped, have typically not been placed on the caseloads of vocational rehabilitation agencies which traditionally have provided vocational services for less disabled individuals (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, 1984). The result is that most severely handicapped citizens usually end up in day activity programs which often do not provide paid employment opportunities, or they remain at home without any programming. This is both unfortunate and unnecessary since research has repeatedly shown that persons with severe handicaps can work when an appropriate ongoing or supported employment training program is provided. (Bellamy et al, 1983; Wehman & Kregel, 1984).

In the late 1970's and 1980's a number of model vocational training and job placement and training programs demonstrated the ability of the adolescent and adult with severe handicaps to work in nonsheltered jobs. Paul Wehman and his colleagues at Virginia Commonwealth University (Wehman, 1981) and Frank Rusch and his colleagues at the University of Illinois (Rusch & Mithaug, 1980), have shown the ability of citizens with moderate and severe handicaps to hold competitive jobs. Thomas Bellamy and his associates at the University of Oregon have shown that even profoundly retarded persons can work in a specialized industrial setting which pays a decent wage and allows the worker to have regular contact with nonhandicapped persons (Bellamy et al, 1979). Other work alternatives such as mobile work crews and work stations in industry have also been used to successfully employ citizens with severe handicaps (Wehman & Kregel, 1984). As a parent of a child with severe developmental disabilities, you no longer need to settle for placement of your child into an adult day program or a sheltered workshop that pays no wage or a very small sum of money paid only on a piecerate basis.

Guidelines for Elementary School Level

Vocational training for elementary-age pupils who are developmentally disabled focuses on assisting them to develop: (1) self-care and daily living skills; (2) positive human relationships and good social skills at home and at school; (3) awareness of vocational opportunities at the upper grade levels and beyond. (Clark, 1979; Herr & Cramer, 1984; Wehman & Pentecost, 1983).

For Your child

1. *Familiarize yourself with your state's regulations dealing with the education of handicapped children.* Write to your representative in Congress and in your state legislature encouraging their commitment to legislation that will enhance the vocational training and employment opportunities for all students. Find out about the policies of your local and state rehabilitation and developmental disabilities agencies regarding employment for the developmentally disabled. On a national level, employment has just recently become a priority for these agencies and there are now several government initiatives. (Will, 1984).

2. *Work with your local schools to insure that vocational training and, in some cases, job placement is an integral part of your child's schooling.* Be sure your child's current individual education program (IEP) specifically addresses employment training. Make sure that the IEP addresses any self-care skills such as eating, toileting, dressing, and grooming that your child does not have. These should be taught in the early school years so that middle and high school programs can lend more time to specific job training. Talk with school officials about employment training opportunities available in the upper grades and make sure that your child's teacher is preparing for the transition into these programs. See that students in special education programs are included in vocational education classes and special vocational-technical education training

centers that many school systems now have.

3. *Assign specific jobs/duties to your child around the home.* Pay your child a small allowance based upon the successful completion of assigned tasks and insist that s/he perform his/her duties completely and on time. Encourage your child to manage his/her money and discuss how planning is essential to good money management. Encourage your child to make independent decisions and accept the consequences. Do not compare your child's efforts with the accomplishments of brothers, sisters, or friends, but rather have him or her continually improve upon his/her own performance.

4. *Find out about successful school and adult training programs and the variety of employment options that are now opening up for even profoundly handicapped citizens around the country.* Do not settle for the notion that your child cannot work!

"Do not settle for the notion of "prevocational" or "readiness" training that is supposedly related to specific job training."

With Your Child

1. *Create opportunities for your child to learn about workers and what they do.* Point out workers to your child when you go out in the community (Hummel & McDaniels, 1979). Discuss what the worker is doing and encourage your child to think about what jobs s/he might like or not like. Share books, magazines, and pictures which introduce workers to your child. Be realistic about the types of jobs a retarded adult is likely to be successful in performing. Some jobs which have proved to be particularly good for disabled workers, including those who are severely handicapped, include: maid, orderly, janitor, auto mechanic helper, food service worker, porter, hand packer, laundry worker, farm laborer, and assembly line worker. Talk about the jobs performed by family members and friends. Discuss the rewards of working other than money, e.g. personal satisfaction, friendships, and independence.

2. *Emphasize personal appearance, physical fitness, and good social and communication skills.* Provide opportunities for daily physical exercise or activities so that your child will develop coordination, stamina, strength, and dexterity. Give your child the opportunity to practice independent eating, dressing, toileting, and grooming skills, and try to avoid doing these things for the child. Encourage your child to develop acceptable social skills by having him/her interact with a wide range of friends, relatives, peers who are not handicapped, and members of the community. It is essential that your son or daughter exhibit socially desirable behaviors and be able to relate with other people if s/he is to hold a job.

Middle School Level

When a student who is severely developmentally disabled reaches the age of twelve or thirteen, a large portion of his or her school day should be devoted to specific vocational training on a variety of jobs in community-based settings (Bates & Pansofar, 1983). At this point, parents need to make sure that schools are providing community-based vocational training for at least several hours each day.

For Your Child

1. *Actively support the teacher's efforts to provide job training in community-based sites.* Help the school identify training sites that are directly related to potential real jobs in the community. Such sites can be hotels, cafeterias, hospitals, and businesses in which family members or friends may work. At the very least, lobby for training in various school sites such as the grounds (grounds maintenance), cafeteria (food service worker), office (messenger), and overall building (janitor). Remember that training in a traditional classroom is the least desirable for students who are severely handicapped (Wilcox & Bellamy, 1982).

2. *See that your child's IEP addresses specific vocational training in a variety of potential jobs.* Do not settle for the notion of "prevocational" or "readiness" training that is supposedly related to specific job training. The only way your child will learn a real job is to practice these job skills in a real job setting.

3. *Make sure that you know what job training is in the high school program.* High school programs should include at least a half-day of job training and inclusion of some actual job placement and paid employment for students nearing graduation. There should be a formal liaison between high school teachers and your local rehabilitative services agency. Find out whether this is occurring, and if not, insist that planning for transition from school to work begin to take place.

4. *Get in touch with your local rehabilitation agency to find out about the training services and job possibilities available for your child.* If the situation looks bleak in your community, insist that changes be made. Agencies have been mandated by federal governing bodies to increase services to citizens with severe handicaps.

5. *Find work outside the home for your child to do during the summer, weekends, and after school.* At this point, volunteer work is okay, for the essential factor is to get your child used to working. Having to follow a schedule, getting to places punctually, and interacting with people

"By the time a child reaches high school or is between ages fifteen and sixteen, a major part of his or her school day should be devoted to vocational training."

other than family members can never be practiced too much!

With Your Child

1. *Continue to work with your child on improving his/her appearance and physical fitness.* Disabled citizens are often turned down or let go from jobs because of their sloppy or dirty appearance or because of their supposed lack of initiative or laziness. Require your child to dress and maintain grooming habits like everyone else. Make sure that exercise is a regular part of each day to build strength and help control weight.

2. *Require your child to complete household chores on a regular basis and provide an allowance only on the basis of correctly completing allotted chores.* The value and importance of work can be reinforced at home by showing your child that everyone has certain important jobs to do, and that payment is based on doing the jobs correctly and on time. As a child gets older, you can assign more tasks and require that they be done in increasingly shorter periods of time. Complying with instructions, working at a fast pace, and increasing work complexity are all important aspects of holding a job.

3. *Get your child into the community for leisure activities.* Go to restaurants, movies, and community events. Take him or her to the grocery store to help with shopping and let your child help choose his or her own clothes. It is important that a person be able to behave properly in all settings, and exposure is the best way to learn. Exposure is also necessary in terms of the general public accepting the handicapped citizen as an equal.

High School Level

By the time a child reaches high school or is between ages fifteen and sixteen, a major part of his or her school day should be devoted to vocational training. By graduation time, a specific job or an adult training program should have been identified for him/her by a team of professionals and family members. As a parent, you may have to see that educators and adult service providers are formally planning the transition of your child from school to work.

For Your Child

1. *See that vocational training in specific jobs is built into your child's IEP.* Teachers should have in mind specific potential jobs based on both sheltered and competitive jobs available in the community for your child. Insist that training for these jobs be conducted in community job settings as part of your child's IEP goals and objectives.

2. *See that a transition team composed of yourself, the teacher, and a rehabilitation agency representative is formed to make plans for your child's employment after graduating.* Advance planning in the form of written goals and objectives similar to an IEP is the best way to assure services for your child after graduation. Remember that adult services are not mandated by law as are school special education programs.

3. *Encourage school personnel to find, place, and train your child in a job, full or part-time, that pays a wage while he/she is still in school.* Because of the lack of mandated employment services for the severely handicapped and overload of clients on rehabilitation case managers, you should support job placement during the school years. It is easier for adult service providers to provide support services for someone already working than to have to start at the beginning.

4. *Find out about all adult programs in your community and make plans before graduation to have your child enter one where some sort of employment is offered if earlier employment cannot be secured.* Of course, the most desirable option for your child is employment in a regular job that pays at or above minimum wage and decent benefits. If this is not attainable while your child is in school, see that he or she gets into a sheltered facility or adult program where the potential for employment exists. Such programs that offer a variety of employment options are the best. Many facilities are starting competitive work programs, work crews (groups of workers who are always supervised) or special industrial programs that pay some kind of wage and enable workers to spend time with nonhandicapped people.

With Your Child

Continue to do all things that you began while your child was in middle school. Promote exercise, good grooming, wise handling of money, and completion of household chores. Allow your child to be as independent as possible and give him/her ample opportunities to get out into the community.

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INFORMATION RESOURCES

The following organizations and individuals should be able to provide you with specific information regarding employment options for citizens who are severely developmentally disabled.

Center on Human Development
Division of Special Education and Rehabilitation
Clinical Services Building
College of Education
Eugene, Oregon 97403-1211

Center for Developmental Disabilities
499C Waterman Building
University of Vermont
Burlington, Vermont 05405

Rehabilitation Research and Training Center
Virginia Commonwealth University
1314 West Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23284-0001

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services
c/o Mrs. Carol Inman
U.S. Department of Education
Room 3132 Switzer Building
330 "C" Street, SW
Washington, DC 20202

National Rehabilitation Information Center
4407 Eighth Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017

Next Steps: Planning for Employment *A Workshop for Parents*

By Winifred Anderson, Carolyn Beckett, Stephen Chitwood, and Deidre Hayden

"Where will my son be in four years? What will he be capable of doing after high school?"

"Our daughter talks of her own paycheck someday. We think she can learn job skills, but she needs individual help. Is that possible? Are we asking too much?"

These quotes reflect parents' concerns about their handicapped children's future vocational opportunities. They look toward their sons' and daughters' daily lives beyond the school setting with both hopes and fears. Will their children be prepared to participate in the work world as fully as their potential allows? What should they, as parents, know and be doing *now* to ensure their sons and daughters will be able to move from the school world to the world of work?

To respond to parents' requests for information and guidance relevant to their role as career education advocates, the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center in Alexandria, Virginia, developed a 15-hour course titled "NEXT STEPS: Planning for Employment."

Previous to the development of NEXT STEPS, the Parent Center's courses prepared parents to participate effectively in the special education process of referral, evaluation, eligibility, IEP and placement for their special needs children. Studies of the effectiveness of those courses demonstrate conclusively that parents gain knowledge and skills needed to promote their child's best interests. More impressively, the studies indicate that school teachers and administrators perceive those parents who have completed the training as being active, cooperative and influential participants in special education procedures.

Parents and service providers can realize the same positive effects when parents are informed about career education and post-secondary placement options for their sons and daughters with disabilities. The myriad of public and private agencies involved in career education, the jargon used in vocational education and job training, and the jumble of local, state and federal laws affecting the training and employment of disabled individuals are overwhelming. Parents must acquire skills and knowledge to negotiate the maze of agencies, jargon, rules and regulations as their children make the transition from school to work. Only in this way will they be successful in working cooperatively and productively with teachers, other school professionals and agency officials in advancing the work capabilities and, ultimately, the extended independence of their handicapped children.

NEXT STEPS: Planning for Employment is a five session course which prepares parents for their roles as career education advocates. They learn the four stages of career education, including career awareness, exploration, preparation, and placement. Within each stage they understand how to integrate the curricula and objectives of career education into their son's or daughter's individualized education program. In the second session of the course a range of post-secondary placement options is explored, including college or junior college, regular competitive employment, the supported work model of competitive employment, and the more sheltered work settings such as workshops and activity centers. Parents gain an understanding of the responsibilities of, and relationships among, the services of special education, vocational education, rehabilitative services and job training programs. During the third session, participants develop a personal profile outlining their child's traits, interests, aptitudes and work adjustment skills. They begin to articulate a sense of their son or daughter as a worker, rather than a youth with limited academic capabilities.

In the fourth session of NEXT STEPS, parents examine the vocational education opportunities available in their school system, and reasonable accommodations that may be necessary for their child to participate in a program. Finally, during the fifth session, participants complete an individualized career education plan that can serve as an informal transition plan for their daughter or son. Parents also discuss ways to implement specific strategies at the school, community, state, and federal level to promote career education programs.

Have parents used the knowledge and skills they gained by participating in NEXT STEPS? The overwhelming response has been "YES!" For example, one mother stated, "I didn't have a vision of my daughter's work potential before. Now I think I have a more realistic picture of her options and what we need to do to get there." A father commented, "My wife and I are now talking about long range plans . . . we hadn't talked to each other about our individual hopes and concerns before." Another person said, "My autistic son is going to junior high school next year. You can be sure that his new IEP will include career education goals and objectives."

Currently, NEXT STEPS is being conducted for parents by Parent Center staff in Alexandria, Virginia. Seven parent-professional teams trained by Parent Center staff to present NEXT STEPS are giving the course in communities in Vermont, New Jersey, Maryland, South Carolina, and Virginia. In November, 1985, additional teams will be trained to conduct NEXT STEPS: Planning for Employment in their communities. For further information about NEXT STEPS, contact the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center, 228 South Pitt Street, Room 300, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, Phone (703) 836-2953.

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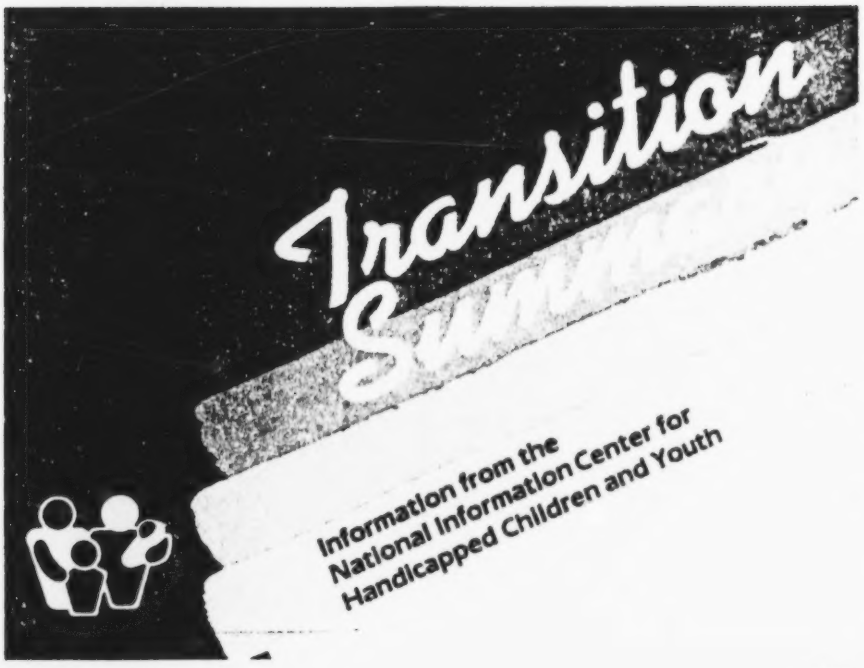
With this newsletter, The National Information Center for Handicapped Children and Youth continues a two-way flow of information with you, the concerned people in communities across America. Let us know about the projects you are developing, the progress you are making, and the good things that are happening in services for the handicapped where you live. If we can hear from you, we can share your information with many other who will find it useful, and, of course, we will give full credit to the originators. Address your responses to: Toni Haas, Director, The National Information Center for Handicapped Children and Youth, 1555 North Wilson Boulevard, Suite 508, Rosslyn, Virginia 22209.



DECEMBER 1985

Community-Wide Transition Planning

By Barbara A. Intriligator
University of Maryland

It is generally agreed that transition service delivery systems need to begin early in students' school years and continue for varying lengths of time after students have left the public school system, as they obtain and maintain employment in non-segregated settings. Because the service need extends beyond the time that schools have responsibility for these clients, effective planning must both include and involve leaders from private and public organizations and agencies in the larger community. This article reports on how one large suburban county in Maryland approached the problem of creating effective transition to work services for county residents with disabilities by using a planning process that importantly involved representatives from all relevant segments of the community including parents, school officials, government offices, adult service providers and local business leaders.

Organizing the Effort

Community action began with the County Executive and the Superintendent of Schools recognizing that at present the county did not provide integrated transition services for its citizens with disabilities and therefore that a coordinated planning activity needed to be initiated that would result in effective county-wide programs and services. Thus, on November 26, 1984, they jointly created a Task Force on the Transition from School to Work for Montgomery County Students with Disabilities composed of thirty-five representatives of education, county government, adult service providers, employers and parents. The work of this Task Force was to be completed by summer, 1985, in order that school and government officials could use its findings to make budget decisions in the interests of this targeted population.

To further reinforce this collective interest, they assigned mutual responsibility for organizing the work of the Task Force to high level staff from each of their respective jurisdictions. Thus, there were two persons appointed as Co-Chairs of the Task Force: Gail Nachman who is Chief of the Division of Services to Handicapped Individuals in the Montgomery County Department of Family Services and Thomas O'Toole who is the Director of Special Education and Related Services in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). In retrospect, the decision to appoint these two Co-Chairs contributed importantly to the ability of the Task Force to function effectively for several reasons: first, their joint presence symbolized to the other Task Force members, as well as to the community at large, that both the Public Schools and County Government recognized that they each had an important role to play in the creation of the transition service delivery system. Second, they were knowledgeable about the range of services currently available to persons with disabilities in their respective systems and held positions within their own organizations that allowed them to keep information about the activities of the Task Force flowing back to the County Executive and the Superintendent as the work progressed (thereby sustaining their interest in the transition problem). Finally, when the work of the Task Force is complete, they will assume responsibility within their respective systems for implementing many of the recommendations; therefore, there will be a smoother transition between the work of the planning group and the implementing agencies.

The need for a community-wide effort to address transition needs was also articulated in the Charge to the Task Force:

> The specific purpose of the Task Force is to establish a collaborative relationship among government, education, private agencies and employers that will facilitate the development, implementation and evaluation of model transition services that increase opportunities for fully competitive or supported competitive employment for MCPS special education students. (*Interim Report*, p. 1)

To that end, a fixed amount of money was set aside by the County Executive to begin implementation of Task Force recommendations, with the promise of future budget decisions to further the transition effort upon receipt of the Task Force Final Report.

Establishing the Ground Rules

Whenever a group of individuals representing diverse organizations and specialty areas come together to accomplish a common purpose, initial time needs to be devoted to establishing the scope of work, to allowing participating organizations to stake out their respective "turfs" and to agreeing upon the authority of the collective group *vis a vis* the problem being addressed and its solution. Many of these issues were addressed by the Task Force as it initially coped with defining the scope of transition services and with articulating the professional principles that would guide the work of the group.

In order to create a common understanding of the work of the Task Force, the group discussed and finally reached agreement on the following issues related to transition to work services. First, the group affirmed that almost all persons with disabilities can perform meaningful work and with supportive services, most can work in the community. Given this guiding principle, the transition planning process needed to result in a continuum of services that would provide preparation for employment, support for obtaining employment and support for maintaining employment. The group also agreed that the target population would be *all* special education students, with handicapping conditions from mild to severe/profound. Obtaining agreement about these kinds of issues brought the Task Force to the following definition of Transition:

1. Transition from school to work for students with disabilities is a three step process involving:

a) school instruction,

b) effective planning for the movement from school to work, and

c) the availability of appropriate options for meaningful work.

2. School instruction, from preschool to graduation, provides the foundation for independent living in the adult world and includes a functional curriculum appropriate to the student's need provided in an integrated school environment and augmented with community-based instructional experiences.

3. Planning for the movement from school to work begins at least three to five years before the student leaves school and results in an individualized plan which is updated at least annually. The planning process involves the student, school, parents and community agencies responsible for providing the necessary adult services. Planning also involves employers and takes into account employment opportunities in the community as well as meaningful post-secondary education and training options for the student.

4. Meaningful work options include:

- competitive employment, with or without support services;
- supervised work in community or business settings;
- specialized industrial contact in the community;
- sheltered workshops used as a transition to community programming; and
- work carried out in home settings.

5. The least restrictive environment concept guides the selection of the appropriate setting.

6. Support services may be time-limited or ongoing. They may include short-term help with job preparation, job seeking, initial adjustment and interpersonal relations on the job site. Ongoing services may include on-the-job training and job support for as long as necessary and long-term follow-up services to assure that a person keeps the job or finds a new job if necessary.

7. The goal of the transition process is to assure meaningful work that provides adequate compensation in terms of income, job satisfaction and opportunity for personal growth and independence for each person with a disability.

8. For those persons whose disability is so severe that work is not a realistic option, the goal of transition is to provide placement in a medical day program with opportunities for personal development and acceptance as a member of the community. (*Rights of Passage*, pp. 6-8)

The work of the Task Force from that point on involved further delineation of the components as well as an assessment of the needs of each segment in the community and the development of a series of recommendations for the county government and for the school system that would enable a transition service delivery system to be implemented. Importantly, it was by making decisions about these issues related to transition early on that members also reached consensus on the purpose of the Task Force and the scope of the work that it would perform. Sometimes agreement was reached quickly; sometimes it took longer, as complex issues needed to be sorted out and clarified. However, taking the time to do this "up front" contributed immeasurably to the ability of the Task Force to successfully accomplish its mission.

Accomplishing the Work

In order to respond to its assigned responsibility, the Task Force divided into three committees for the purpose of data collection. Committee One conducted a needs assessment to determine what the specific transition problems were in the county and where students with different disabilities encountered gaps in services or long waiting lists reflecting an inadequate level or amount of service in a particular area. Potential and existing services were analyzed within the public school system, the county government, the business community and the adult service provider sector in order to determine how effectively the County currently provided support through each of the transition phases including preparation for employment, obtaining meaningful work and maintaining employment. Two of the most interesting findings in these areas included: the public schools do not provide existing services equitably and that some services are not available to students with disabilities at all, and that eligibility criteria for private agencies are determined by funding

source, which results in individuals in some disability groups having no place in the county to go for help. (*Interim Report*, p. 10)

As a part of that effort, a comprehensive survey of local employers was conducted in order to ascertain hiring practices of businesses related to individuals with disabilities, employer understanding of problems and needs of this group, and employer attitudes, knowledge and beliefs about their responsibilities toward employment of this target population. Committee One found that "Far more companies have policies than have programs for employing persons with disabilities. This may indicate that employers would hire persons with disabilities if they had sufficient knowledge and support." (*Interim Report*, p. 12). There was indeed an articulated interest in the business community in the work of the Task Force as evidenced both by the many Task Force members who represent local businesses and by the cooperation provided in conducting the survey. However, one of the major challenges of this effort has been how to coordinate the efforts of individual companies. By extension, the group identified several scattered interactions between different companies and various segments of the Montgomery County Community, thereby surfacing a need to coordinate these activities in a way that would result in maximum benefit to disabled persons from the business sector involvement.

Committee Two assumed the responsibility of identifying programmatic solutions to the problems being identified by Committee One. To that end, they gathered descriptions of transition programs being conducted throughout the country in order to ascertain whether they would be adaptable to Montgomery County. During that process they put together an extensive resource file which will be available to program implementors once decisions are made about Task Force final recommendations. The group developed a list of common characteristics that were present in the exemplary programs they reviewed. These characteristics included:

"The single, most pervasive finding of the data collection team was that there was a need to coordinate the provision of transition services in the county."

- A cooperative service delivery system involving several school system units as well as parents, business and community agencies;
- Training and job placement in non-segregated community environments;
- Continuous employer involvement in all phases of the training;
- A sophisticated public relations program, including a media blitz, to increase public awareness; and
- Increased involvement by school systems in preparing students for employment. (*Interim Report*, p. 13)

Committee Three focused on existing legislation and policies that affect transition to work for disabled persons. They conducted an extensive review of Federal, state and local laws and regulations in order to identify ways in which problems with transition services could be addressed through legislative solutions. The 14 statutes and regulations that were analyzed included those related to vocational education, rehabilitation, job training, developmental disabilities, education of the handicapped, tax credits and proposed new state legislation. As a part of its task, this group produced a summary of existing legislation that brings together in one document the major requirements of each act and the ways in which transition to work services are affected.

Some of the findings include:

- The Federal government has not clarified eligibility requirements especially as they relate to transition programs;
- Nomenclature is not uniform from one Act to another, and from one Agency to another; and
- Suspension of benefits by the Federal government following job placement for persons with disabilities often acts as a disincentive to their obtaining employment. (*Committee Three Report*, 8-14 passim)

These findings reinforced the Task Force's initial belief that effective transition planning requires making changes in existing legislation and administrative policies. Therefore, some final recommendations address ways in which all segments of the community can begin to influence those processes.

The Need for Coordination

The single, most pervasive finding of the data collection team was that there was a need to coordinate the provision of transition services in the county. Each committee independently identified a lack of coordination as a key problem: This was true both within the separate county government and school systems and among all the significant actors, e.g., adult service providers, local businesses, the public schools, post-secondary institutions and county government. For example, there was no single unit or individual within the public schools with responsibility for the provision of transition to work services and programs to students with disabilities. In addition, different government agencies did not seek to identify ways in which their separate service delivery systems complemented and/or contradicted each other. As a result, the Task Force developed a series of recommendations designed to have both the county government and the public schools do a more effective job of internal coordination of their transition services.

In addition, the Task Force explored several options for coordinating its proposed continuum of transition services throughout the county. The major concerns were that students and their parents have access to information about available services during school years and after leaving high school, that duplication of services be eliminated, and that the range of existing services be explored to address gaps that would surface from this overall coordination of services. The process of developing *Rights of Passage*, the Montgomery County Task Force report, was thoughtfully and carefully designed so that the actors with significant responsibility for implementing transition services could engage in the collaborative behaviors necessary for ultimate success of the plan. County-wide coordination will require continuing attention to these principles of collaboration.

There are several factors that influence successful collaboration that will need to be taken into consideration as these coordination efforts are put into place. These factors emerged from research conducted on intergovernmental arrangements that were viewed as successful by their members. The most powerful predictor of success is the use of a collaborative or shared decision-making process throughout the planning and implementation of the cooperative effort. In addition, the Task Force has recognized that cooperative agreements are not sufficient to accomplish this goal. Indeed, the Task Force itself serves as a model of a collaborative approach to design a plan for a system of integrated transition services for MCPS special education students. Its report is stronger and wiser because it represents the combined wisdom and understandings of the range of professionals and decision-makers who have responsibility for this target population and who have a commitment to meeting transition needs from preparation for employment to obtaining employment to maintaining employment.

1. Organizations that decide to collaborate have already formed perceptions of their own areas of responsibility. Their interest will be in designing a collaborative arrangement wherein each party's domain is acknowledged. Therefore, initial time will need to be devoted to establishing agreement about each organization's area of expertise, what each wishes to get out of the arrangement and what resources each party will contribute.

2. Organizations that decide to collaborate usually enter into the relationship with different operating procedures. Therefore, each party will need to clearly delineate the way in which clients gain access to their services as well as the specific ways in which their personnel actually treat each client and share these separate procedures with each other.

3. Organizations that decide to collaborate typically believe that they are over-worked with long waiting lists of their own clients who need help. Therefore, members will need to design their work in such a way that member organizations may be relieved from existing responsibilities, not presented with additional responsibilities. Therefore, the work of the collaborative will need to be based on an exchange process wherein the terms of the exchange are delineated and ways in which all participants will benefit are defined.

4. Different service organizations have different language systems. That is, differences in the ways in which they organize their work, screen their clients, and run their operations may interfere with the ability of the collaborative to function. Therefore, potential collaborative members will need to translate each other's professional and organizational languages into a common lexicon of terms and procedures that can be understood by each partner.

Attention to these four collaboration principles results in a truly collaborative coordination effort—that is, one in which each participating organization has an equitable role in the decision-making process. This in turn builds trust among the member organizations and ultimately results in a more effective service delivery system for the clients.

Rights of Passage, Final Report of the Task Force on the Transition from School to Work for Montgomery County Students With Disabilities, Montgomery County, MD, August 1985.

RESOURCES

More information about the Montgomery County (MD) Task Force work, the research that the Task Force Committees conducted, their survey of exemplary programs and the report, *Rights of Passage*, is available from: Margit Meissner, Assistant for Policy Development and Implementation, Office of Special and Alternative Education, Montgomery County School System, 850 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD 20850, (301) 279-3604.

More information about interorganizational relationships and collaborative planning is available from the author, who has done wide-ranging research in this area and served as a consultant to the Montgomery County Task Force. Her address is: Dr. Barbara A. Intriligator, Assistant Professor, Department of Education Policy, Planning and Administration, 3110 Benjamin Building, College of Education, University of Maryland-College Park, College Park, MD 20742, (301) 454-5766.

Advice to Professionals: LISTEN & ADAPT

"Some professionals seem to have the idea that a particular procedure or exercise doesn't hurt, even if I tell them it does. Or that they should pick me up, or handle me in a certain way, even though I try to tell them there is another way that works well or is comfortable to me. That is frustrating to me."

Blane Lawson knows a great deal about services for people with disabilities. Lawson, who has Werdnig-Hoffmann's disease, a degenerative neuromuscular disorder, has seen many positive changes in services in his nineteen years of experience. He also has intimate knowledge of the frustrations of trying to live a full life with a severe physical disability. In a gentle but determined manner, both he and his family have presented challenges to the health, educational and social services designed to promote his greatest possible independent functioning.

In a recent interview, Lawson, who was originally diagnosed at University Hospitals and was an outpatient at Hospital School as a young child, commented on two aspects of professional care that have been particularly important to him. One is that professionals should listen first to the individual being served, especially a person who, like Lawson, has years of experience with his condition and knows what works and does not work in terms of care.

"Of course, a lot of the technical parts of my medical care I don't know very much about, although my mom does. My doctor in Fort Dodge tends to turn things over to her a lot. He'll offer some alternatives, but Mom usually seems to know what kinds of things will help."

Lawson's mother is Carla Lawson, executive director of Iowa Pilot Parents, who has made a number of presentations on professional-parent interactions, both to the pediatric residents at the main hospital and at grand rounds at Hospital School.

Blane Lawson's worst experiences with professionals have been with those who did not wait to learn his feelings or directions for care. "Some professionals seem to have the idea that a particular procedure or exercise doesn't hurt, even if I tell them it does. Or that they should pick me up, or handle me in a certain way, even though I try to tell them there is another way that works well or is comfortable for me. That is frustrating to me. To a child, it is also kind of frightening to have the impression that you just don't count. It is the professionals who let me do some instructing that are the best."

Particularly in the area of education, Lawson has found that another key to making things work for him is to have teachers and school systems that are willing to adapt and be creative.

"When I was in elementary school in Mason City, my brother and I had an attendant in school, but the teacher let our good friend John Williams do a lot of the helping work. The attendant was there but she was in the background a lot. We were always in a classroom with John until we moved. It made things a lot more natural to have a friend with us instead of a grown-up." As they got older and more dependent physically, the full-time attendant for school became more of a presence in their lives.

"The junior high in Fort Dodge made a lot of adaptations for us too. They put in ramps and an elevator so we could get to the upper level classrooms when we were using electric wheelchairs. Now they have a lift as well, but that came after we left."

Adaptation is still a critical part of Lawson's educational needs. He has finished one year in computer programming at Iowa Central Community College and has begun a second year. His efforts have been challenged by illnesses, including a prolonged one this past fall, that have kept him at home for long periods of time. Flexibility in classroom work has been Lawson's lifeline for staying in his educational program.

"Many of the teachers have been great. I've been allowed to take tests home, and even had tests given over the phone. Even though I can tape lectures, I miss a lot of work that is done on the blackboard, so videotaping might be a possibility. We might also try a telephone hookup to the classroom. Note taking is real difficult for me, so I either need someone to take notes or lots of handouts." Lawson's computer at home has kept him from having to struggle with the crowds to get computer time at the college, and also provides many options which help him keep up with his classwork when he is home ill.

Although faced with immediate difficulties in keeping up with school, Lawson is looking to the future and to the possibilities his computer training, which he hopes will be a four year program, will offer him for employment at home. "I hate just fooling around and then asking my parents for money," he says.

At the request of Kathy Green, former high school vocational education teacher, Lawson and his mother have written an article on the problems of transitioning from educational to vocational services as part of the transitioning project jointly sponsored by the Iowa Department of Public Instruction and the Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center. The article will be used in one of the project's newsletters, an example of a constructive willingness to use Lawson's experience to help professionals do their jobs better.

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"Our findings indicated that youths from a resource room placement were more likely to be employed after high school than those from special classes. While this may be due in part to the generally higher level of functioning of resource room students, a question might be raised about the interaction of other variables."

A Summary of "Factors Associated with the Employment Status of Handicapped Youth Exiting High School from 1979 to 1983"

By Susan Brody Hasazi, Lawrence R. Gordon, Cheryl Ann Roe
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Factors associated with the employment status of handicapped youth were investigated in a sample of 462 youths from nine Vermont school districts. All students from these districts who exited high school between 1979 and 1983, and who had been receiving special education services were identified. Interviews were conducted with 301 of these former students covering employment and training history, and use of social services. Additional information regarding educational history, age, and community demographics was obtained through individual student records.

An important variable being investigated was current employment status, i.e., employment status at the time of the interview. Of those interviewed, 55% had some kind of paid employment at the time of the interview, and approximately two-thirds of these positions were full-time. Eight percent of those interviewed were homemakers, 3% were full-time students (post-secondary), 3% were receiving disability benefits, 1% were in either a job training program or a mental health day program, while 24% were unemployed and actively looking for jobs. The remaining 7% were unemployed for unspecified reasons.

Districts included in the study were classified as "rural" (comprising districts which had no participating towns with a population greater than 2500), "urban" (comprising districts which had one or more participating towns with a population greater than 2500), or "metropolitan" (comprising districts located in population centers of standard metropolitan statistical areas). (Bureau of the Census, 1981)

Location was a significant factor in determining employment status with this cross-disability sample. The employment rate for handicapped youths in urban areas was higher than in rural or metropolitan areas. For the general population in Vermont, the employment rate in the rural areas is also lower than in other areas. However, the lower employment rate for handicapped youths in the metropolitan area needs further study.

To examine the influence of the level of functioning on current employment status, former students were classified into groups according to their most recent high school program. The resource room program served students with a variety of mild and moderate handicapping conditions, while special class programs served students labeled educable and trainable mentally retarded. In our sample 66% were from resource rooms and 29% were from special classes. The remaining 5% were from a variety of other programs and were eliminated from our statistical analyses.

Our findings indicated that youths from a resource room placement were more likely to be employed after high school than those from special classes. While this may be due in part to the generally higher level of functioning of resource room students, a question might be raised about the interaction of other variables. Summer jobs during high school, outside, part-time work during high school and participation in vocational classes during high school were all found to be significantly linked to employment after high school. Students in the special class group generally have less opportunity to participate in mainstream vocational programs and have less experience with real, nonsubsidized jobs during their school careers. Instead of vocational classes, special class students often have work experience programs as part of their high school curriculum. Until recently in Vermont, these experiences were short-term, may or may not have included wages, and often had few of the conditions associated with competitive employment. While these programs may be useful in terms of career exploration, our study found that participation in the work experience program was unrelated to employment status following school. We feel that it is vital for handicapped high school students to have as many opportunities as possible to learn about work conditions associated with paying jobs. Not only were summer and real school-year jobs related to positive employment status, but they were also significantly linked to longer total employment time since high school. Perhaps high school special educators should consider an emphasis on placement of handicapped students

in competitive employment positions while still in high school.

Another factor examined was manner of exit from school. Graduation helped for the resource room students, but did not make a difference for the special class students. Perhaps for those students with more obvious handicaps, employers use a criterion of competence other than a high school diploma.

When gender was examined in relationship to employment status, the results were significant and disturbing. Males were twice as likely to be employed as females (67% vs. 33%). For the general population in Vermont, the average annual employment rate for 1983, as reported by the Vermont Department of Employment and Training was approximately 87% for both males and females, ages 16 to 24. This discrepancy raises questions regarding the expectations for young women with handicaps and the subsequent training and vocational experiences that they receive. These questions need further investigation.

Individuals reporting that they were currently employed were asked how they found their jobs. The majority of youths (84%) utilized what we have termed their "self-family-friend network." The contact rates with specialized employment services were very low, however 35% of the sample had contacted the generic employment agency. This agency is probably more familiar to many of the former students as it is likely to be used by the students' friends and family members and as such has no "stigma" associated with it. An idea to consider would be to locate the specialized services in the same setting as the generic agency to facilitate a linkup between the handicapped job-seeker and the appropriate agency.

The greatest percentage of employed former students were in service occupations, and this was true for all areas across the state. This was not surprising since service occupations represent the fastest growing sector of the Vermont economy. These jobs have many entry level positions, and they also tend to have high turnover rates, making them relatively accessible to persons with limited experience and training.

Our sample included a subset of individuals for which this interview had been repeated annually for up to four years, since 1980. For these individuals it was possible to track employment transitions from year to year. The results show that employment status is dynamic for youths with handicaps. Of the 220 youths who were interviewed over two consecutive years, 23% showed a change in employment status from one year to the next. In a further analysis of 40 youths who were interviewed over four consecutive years, 63% showed a change in employment status during the four year interview schedule. This finding underscores the need for frequent and longitudinal data collection to provide an accurate picture of the post-school experiences of former special education students.

For more complete information on this project, see the report and comments in the SPECIAL FEATURE section of *Exceptional Children*, Volume 51, published April 1985.

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NOTE TO OUR READERS:

The first issue of *Transition Summary*, July 1985, included a section of Information Resources that can provide specific information regarding employment options for citizens who are disabled. For additional post-secondary options, also write or call HEATH, 1 Dupont Circle, Washington, DC 20036, 800/54-HEATH (Toll Free).

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